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# ARMY ORGANISATION

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## SPEECH

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

*On the 3rd March 1881*

BY THE

RIGHT HON. HUGH C. E. CHILDERS, M.P.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR

LONDON  
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1881



## ARMY ORGANISATION.

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MR. SPEAKER,

I rise, in accordance with the understanding arrived at on Tuesday, to move that you do now leave the Chair, in order that I may have an opportunity of explaining to the House the main recommendations of the Government as to changes in Army Organisation, and other matters not strictly financial, which it is my duty to place before the House of Commons.

I will first ask the House to recall to their recollection our military condition in 1867, fourteen years ago, when General Peel, standing at this table, moved the Army Estimates. The organisation of our military forces was far less efficient than it is now. The Militia were still practically separated from the Army, and, indeed, the Militia Vote had only quite recently been prepared and moved by the Secretary of State instead of by a Select Committee. Less than 2,000 Militiamen annually enlisted into the Army. The Volunteers had only about 150,000 efficients against about 200,000 now, were hardly at all connected with the Army, and were still regarded with little favour in many quarters. In the Army itself, the

system which we now call that of 'Long Service' had in two respects entirely broken down. It held out insufficient inducements to recruits ; so much so, that from 28,000 a-year in 1859, the number annually recruited had fallen in 1865 to about 13,000, against above 20,000 stated by Lord William Paulet, the Adjutant-General, to be required ; and it had entirely failed to produce any Reserve. Almost the whole body of the older officers disapproved of the system, and looked back with regret on that which before 1847 had been known as 'Life Service,' and which had in that year only been abolished, against the general sense of the officers, by the personal influence of the Duke of Wellington. Indeed, it is most instructive to read, on this question, the evidence taken by the Recruiting Commissions of 1860 and 1866. The Commission of 1860 was appointed because, to use the words of the Report, 'even when, after the Mutiny, the bounty was increased, and the standard lowered to such an extent as to bring boys instead of men into the ranks, the required establishment was not complete.' But the remedies they proposed failed ; and then the second Commission was appointed, in 1866, because the number of recruits had fallen to the extent which I have just described. Then, as before and since, the most varied opinions were given as to every detail of Army Service, but the great majority condemned the then existing length of service (ten or twelve years) as too short. The Adjutant-General, in 1866, especially complained of the youth of non-commissioned officers, and urged the increase of pen-



sions as a means of filling the Army with older men. The Commander-in-Chief was anxious for enlistment for twenty-one years; and did not consider any Army of Reserve necessary. Lord Grey, on the other hand, thought the Militia a gigantic mistake, and that the failure of the plan for a Reserve was due to the manner of its administration. There was a minority who advocated still shorter service; so that every view, from life enlistment to a colour service like that which prevailed in foreign armies, was represented by witnesses before the Commissions.

On the question of the adequacy of recruiting for a 12 years' service, the second Commission were hopeful, if large additions were made to the pay and prospects of the soldier; but as to the formation of a Reserve they practically despaired. For a solid Reserve they said we must look to the Militia; and for two or three years after their Report, nothing in this respect was done.

But meanwhile the country was dissatisfied. The Crimean War had indeed shown, some years before, that without a Reserve of men who had passed through the Army, our military force would soon be exhausted; but it was the two great wars in which Germany was concerned that occasioned the deepest anxiety in the public mind. In 1866, Prussia, with an army consisting of men between 20 and 23 years of age, enlisted for three years with the colours, and, supported by reserves, had, in seven weeks, totally defeated the more veteran troops of Austria; and in 1870, the French army, which had

only recently been re-formed on the basis of containing a much larger proportion of old soldiers, received a still more crushing defeat at the hands of Germany. Is it to be wondered at that the difficulty in obtaining recruits, and the impossibility of forming a Reserve with long service, taken in connection with the evidence of what a short-service system could do on the Continent, made public opinion all but unanimous in favour of such a system being tried here?

Lord Cardwell, however, did not effect this change all at once. In the artillery and cavalry it commenced in 1874; and as the period with the colours was fixed at 8 years, it is only in the financial year 1881–82 that the Reserve will begin to be fed from these arms. In the infantry it began in 1870, and for some time recruits were accepted both for long service (that is to say, 12 years with the colours) and for short service (or 6 years with the colours and 6 in the Reserve). But it was soon found that both systems would not work together. Men would not enlist for long service, if they could enter the Army for the shorter period; and at present the only term of infantry service, with unimportant exceptions, is 6 years.

Lord Cardwell's second reform, the first in point of date, was to recall from the Colonies a large number of battalions serving there, until the number of the home battalions and of those serving in India and the Colonies were just equal. He then took advantage of this equality to combine the battalions in pairs, a system which he found in existence with respect to

the 25 first regiments ; and for this purpose adopted a plan proposed by the Commander-in-Chief, for linking, as it was called, a pair of battalions, so that each battalion abroad should be mainly fed by drafts from the one at home ; which, when low on the roster, would be little more than a recruiting machine. With the two Line regiments he linked two county Militia regiments, establishing depôt centres for the four battalions, which formed a brigade ; and to this depôt he appointed a colonel and other officers, both for the recruits to the two regiments and for training the Militia.

Lord Cardwell's third reform was the Abolition of Purchase. The disadvantages of that system were manifest ; but it had one great merit, inasmuch as it enabled officers who did not care to make the Army their profession, or saw little chance of advancement, to retire by the sale of their commissions, and thus secured a most unequal, but still large, flow of regimental promotion. It remained, however, to be seen how this promotion could be secured in a professional service.

We have now, Sir, had from eight to ten years' experience of these changes, and the time has arrived for reviewing them, and, if any defects have appeared, for applying the necessary remedies. I will endeavour to point out to the House some of their merits, in what respects they have been criticised, what blots, if any, have been hit, and how we propose to cure them.

I will take in the first place the question of the

proper length of service. Now, there can be no doubt whatever that to short service we owe the fact not only that we have obtained of late years an ample supply of recruits, but that they are almost from year to year of a better class, and of a higher average of age. Comparing 1871 and 1879, we had in the Army at the former period 190 men in every thousand under 20 years of age, and in the latter only 106; and the percentage of recruits under 20 years of age in 1874 (which is the first year in which the information is shown in the official returns) and 1879 was 58 and 43 respectively.

But, on the other hand, there are two considerations to which I think great weight must be attached. The first is, that whereas Lord Cardwell only appears to have contemplated that three-fourths of the recruits should be enlisted for short service, and one-fourth for the whole term of 12 years, the fact that the two systems of recruiting would not work together has led to the whole of the Line being recruited for short service, and hence arises the inability to retain any men with the colours for more than 6 years, except with their own consent. The second is, that the Army has to provide, not only for service in this kingdom and its Colonies, but, so far as European troops are concerned, for India; and that a 6-year term of service, especially where the Army is to a great extent recruited at 18 and 19 years of age, does not practically give an average of more than 4 years in India. There is, I admit, great difference of opinion, both medical and military, as to the proper

length of a soldier's Indian service. But after carefully considering these conflicting views, I think it may be fairly said that 6 years is, according to the best authorities, about the time during which a soldier who is not invalided should generally be kept in India, and this undoubtedly points to an increase in the present time of service.

This question of the proper length of service was, in 1879, referred by my predecessor to a Committee of eleven officers (generals and colonels), over which Lord Airey presided. I do not mean that this was the only question upon which the Committee were invited to advise the Secretary of State, but the others were subsidiary to it, except perhaps the best means for obtaining more efficient non-commissioned officers. Much difference of opinion was expressed by the Committee. One member did not sign the Report, and five more signed it with qualifications. But on the question of the length of service, a decided majority were in favour of enlistment for  $14\frac{1}{2}$  years, of which six months were to be at the depôt, eight years with the colours, and six with the Reserve.

One very distinguished member of the Committee, Sir Lintorn Simmons, who is known as the writer of letters signed 'One who has served,' wholly differed from his colleagues, and advocated enlistment for three years only with the colours, any extension of that period for foreign service being voluntarily made by the soldier. We do not think that it would be possible to rely for the defence of our possessions abroad, requiring about 90,000 men in India and the

Colonies under arms, on such a system of volunteering ; and, after well weighing its merits, I am unable to adopt Sir Lintorn Simmons's plan. But with some modification, the plan of the Committee is, in my opinion, more feasible ; and I will now state in what respects I think it faulty. It assumes that men could be enlisted for  $14\frac{1}{2}$  years without infallibly raising a claim for pension. Now, I do not believe this. Under the system in force in 1867, it was found very difficult to obtain 13,000 men for the Army with the obligation to only 10 years' service. I doubt, therefore, whether, without the promise of pensions, or without large bounties, 25,000 men could be got annually for a service of  $14\frac{1}{2}$  years. But with pensions, the expense would be such as no House of Commons could be expected to pay. Reference to the 73rd Appendix to the Report of the Committee, which will be in the hands of Hon. Members to-morrow, will show that without pensions the proposals of the Committee would add to the normal expense of the Army about 700,000*l.* a year ; with pensions, this increase would reach at least 1,500,000*l.*

The Report of Lord Airey's Committee also contains a proposal for abolishing the system of linked Regiments, and for obtaining recruits for each battalion separately, whether at home or abroad, from large training depôts. I must refer to this part of their Report with some qualification, because, however eminent may have been the gentlemen who constituted the Committee, their opinion on this question was not sought in the official reference to them. On

the contrary, they were told 'that there was no intention on the part of the Government to depart from the general principles of reorganisation which had been accepted by the country since 1870;' and the 'Formation of the Army in Regiments of more than one battalion for the purposes of mutual support' was expressly stated to be one of those general principles. I find, however, that at the last moment, when five-sixths of the evidence had been taken, and when the Committee were on the eve of preparing their Report, a note, in an unofficial form, of which there is no record in the War Office, was received by the Chairman of the Committee, saying that they were not 'precluded from touching on' this question. Whatever may have been the authority for this note, I must decline to treat the recommendations of the Committee on this head, in which they were not unanimous, as other than the personal opinions of a body of officers for whom, as individuals, I have the greatest respect.

On the question of the effect of promotion on the abolition of purchase, it became soon evident that, without the adoption of some comprehensive scheme, great stagnation would occur under the new system. As I had for some years before taken, myself, a great interest in this question, and, anticipating the consequences of the abolition of purchase in the Line, had studied it as chairman of a Select Committee with reference to the three corps in which purchase did not exist, I mean the Artillery, the Engineers, and the Marines, I hope I may be permitted to

detain the Committee for a few moments while I explain the conclusions at which I arrived, and which formed the basis of the scheme of naval retirement of 1870, with which my name is connected. No plan will secure an efficient and steady system of promotion which is not constructed according to mathematical rules in two respects—one the proper proportion of the higher to the lower ranks of the service, and the other the ages at which officers must retire from those ranks. If the higher ranks are unduly small compared with the lower, you must provide from the latter a very burdensome and unpopular forced retirement at an early age. If you are able to increase the proportion of the higher ranks, this forced retirement may be minimised and even almost dispensed with. Now, this was what I effected in the Navy, and what Lord Cardwell did in the Artillery and Engineers. By largely reducing the number of cadet entries, and the volume of the ranks of sub-lieutenant and lieutenant as compared with the higher ranks, the Admiralty will be able, when the great surplus list of officers has been reduced, to keep promotion in an efficient state. Similarly, Lord Cardwell reduced the captains and subalterns, and created majors, of Artillery and Engineers, with the result that there will be in those corps little or no forced retirement from the rank of captain. But with respect to the Line and the cavalry, the Secretary of State who succeeded Lord Cardwell appointed a Royal Commission under the presidency of Lord Penzance, which, not feeling itself authorised to pro-



pose any alteration in the relative numbers of regimental ranks, necessarily fell back on compulsory retirement at early ages, and so, if they solved the problem at all, did so at an enormous cost, and in the way most distasteful to the officers themselves. I shall give the figures when I describe the remedy we propose, but in passing I will only say that the present system will force out of the Army more than half its officers before or when they reach the early age of forty.

I think I have now brought my narrative of the changes introduced into the Army between 1867 and 1872, and of the controversies which they have evoked, pretty well down to the present day, and I proceed to explain what proposals we have determined upon. I will do so as concisely as possible, first explaining what are those which are of a general character; then giving in more detail the alterations in length of service and regimental organisation which we consider necessary.

I will first take changes which affect specially the Auxiliary Forces. Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to decide that the number of her aides-de-camp shall be increased by four, and that these much-prized though honorary distinctions shall be conferred on Volunteer officers. Her Majesty has also approved of an alteration in the regulations of the Order of the Bath, under which five Knight Commanderships and twenty-five Companionships of the Civil branch of that Order will be conferred upon officers of the Auxiliary and Reserve Forces who may, while in

command of a regiment, have contributed in a marked degree to its efficiency.

Perhaps I may here state that I am permitted by Her Majesty to announce her intention to hold a review of the Volunteers in Windsor Park, unless anything unforeseen should occur to prevent it, either in the middle of May or towards the end of June.

My attention has been drawn to some anomalies in the regulations under which Militia and Volunteer officers are allowed to retain their rank or to obtain steps of honorary rank after long service or on retirement. It has been decided that after fifteen years' commissioned service in any of the Auxiliary Forces or in combination with Army service, an officer will be allowed, if duly recommended, to retain his rank and wear his uniform; that after twenty-five years' similar service in the Militia or Yeomanry, or thirty years in the Volunteers, a lieutenant-colonel or a major will be allowed a step of honorary rank, and a captain after twenty years in the Militia or Yeomanry, or twenty-five in the Volunteers. The same boons, if not already granted while serving, will be granted on retirement, and in each case combined service will count like service in the corps from which the officer retires, or in which he gets the step of honorary rank.

There is one other question in connection with the Volunteers, about which, after taking the highest legal advice, I have not felt able to comply with a suggestion from time to time made in this House, namely, that Volunteer officers should be exempt from

serving on juries, to the same extent as Militia officers. Militia officers are, in fact, only exempt while on full pay, which Volunteers never receive; but that is not the only difficulty. I do not see on what ground we could exempt Volunteer officers and not privates, who for the most part are of the same social class; and if we exempted the latter, among whom there must be many thousand jurymen, a heavy burden would be thrown on the rest of the community, which it would be impossible to justify. I have therefore arrived at the conclusion that I should not recommend to Parliament an amendment in this sense of the Juries Act. I believe, however, as a matter of fact, that Judges will always excuse Volunteers shown to be absent in camp, or on similar duty.

With respect to the Militia, I shall explain, before I sit down, the arrangements we contemplate, acting on the Report of my Right Honourable predecessor as Chairman of the Committee of 1876, for still more closely connecting this ancient constitutional force with the Army proper, by making county Militia regiments the 3rd and 4th battalions of the new territorial regiments. But in thus bringing the Militia into still closer connection with the Line, I think it will be necessary to apply to their officers some rules as to age retirement, the absence of which has certainly produced some remarkable anomalies. I find among colonels and lieutenant-colonels actually commanding regiments (I do not include honorary colonels) officers of over 70 years of age, and some nearly as old among majors. In future we intend to provide

that no colonel, or lieutenant-colonel commanding, shall retain his appointment after 55, or, under special circumstances, 60 years of age; and that none now serving remain after 67, or, if at present under 60, after 62 years of age. All future majors will retire at 50, and all present majors at 55. All captains will retire at 50.

Passing from the Auxiliary Forces, I will now fulfil the promise which I gave to the late First Lord of the Admiralty a few days ago, that I would explain our policy about ordnance. I hope to give full details of the *matériel* to be bought or manufactured this year when we arrive at vote 12; but, meanwhile, I may say that we are now engaged in a series of important experiments with breech-loading guns of various calibres, from the 43-ton gun to a 13-pounder field gun; and the recent renewal of the controversy between the muzzle-loader and the breech-loader, and the multiplicity of proposals for ordnance of every variety of construction, have led Her Majesty's Government to the conclusion that it would be desirable to recur to the advice of an independent Ordnance Committee, with functions somewhat differing from those of the former Committee. It will consist of officers of the Artillery, of the Navy, and of the Engineers, with two eminent civil engineers; and while we hope to obtain from this Committee technical advice of extreme value, we have determined not to run the risk of the disadvantages felt in connection with the old Ordnance Committee, and strictly to limit its functions to such inquiries and experiments

as may be categorically referred to it by the Minister holding my office. We have every reason to believe that the additional cost to the country, about 3,000*l.* a year, of the services of these gentlemen will be far more than compensated for by the valuable results which the weight of their authority may be expected to secure. I had hoped to be able to name to-day the gentlemen selected for this service; but I find I must postpone doing so for a few days.

I will now state to the House what we recommend as to length of service.

In the first place, we propose to raise the minimum age when a man may be enlisted from 18, at which it now stands, to 19; and not only to that age nominally, but so that no man who (though 19) has not the physical equivalent of that age will be accepted. I should have been glad to raise the minimum age to 20, and I hope that this may be possible before long; but if we did so at present, we should risk not obtaining a sufficient number of recruits. No man under 20 years of age, or with less than a year's service, will under any circumstances be sent to India or to a tropical station; and it is most desirable that after arrival he should not be employed on active service for a year or so, that is to say, until he is acclimatised.

In the second place, we propose that the term of enlistment should remain 12 years, as now, but that the period with the colours should be 7 instead of 6 years; and that all soldiers serving abroad should be liable to remain with the colours 8 years, and, if serv-

ing in India, should always be required to give this additional year. This extra year's service is rarely enforced now, but we propose to make it the rule. The effect of these two changes will be, that instead of serving from 18 to 24 years of age, every man who goes to India will serve in the Army at least from 19 to 27.

We have well considered whether it would be safe to make obligatory colour service longer than 8 years, but we have decided that this very considerable increase on the present system goes as far as prudence will allow. I have carefully read the Reports of, and the evidence taken before, the two Commissions of 1860 and 1866, and Lord Airey's Committee; and while I find many officers anxious to revert to the old term of what is now called long colour service, *i.e.* 12 years, and indifferent to the formation of an Army Reserve, which this would render impossible, I find hardly anyone advocating 9 or 10 years with the colours. The term we have proposed, and which was formerly recommended among soldiers by Sir Charles Napier, and among civilians by Mr. Godley, will, I believe, both supply us sufficient recruits, and, with the further provisions I shall explain, steadily build up a Reserve. It must be remembered that it is to the attractions of short service with the colours, and passage to the Reserve, that we owe the great majority of our recruits and their continuous improvement, and we must be cautious lest in making the term of service too long we spoil our market, and revert to the disastrous state of things in 1860 and 1866.

We also propose that the Secretaries of State for War and India should from time to time settle the extent to which, and the terms on which, a certain proportion of men in good health, and serving in India, should be allowed to extend their service within the period of their engagement. I doubt whether it will be often necessary to carry out this extension for more than 2 years, as the previous conditions will ensure from 6 to 7 years' service for all men in India who may not be invalided; and probably not more than 10 to 15 per cent. of the privates of a regiment will, under any circumstances, be permitted so to extend their service.

I come now to non-commissioned officers; and in addition to the other advantages of pay, pension, and rank, which we intend to give them, we propose the following boons in respect of service:—

First. Every corporal, on completing a year's probation and being confirmed in his rank, will be allowed to extend his colour service to the full period of twelve years.

Secondly. Every sergeant will be allowed to engage for his second term of nine years, subject only to the veto of the War Office in each individual case; and thus to have an 'assured military career' of 21 years, ending with a pension. His deferred pay will also continue during his second term of service, instead of ceasing as now after twelve years.

Similarly, every corporal will be allowed, with the sanction of his commanding officer, to engage for his second term of service, and to earn a pension.

Finally, we shall arrange that sergeants, after 15 or 16 years' service, shall be liable to be transferred to the permanent staff of their Militia battalions.

I may say that we propose that the term of 7 or 8 years' service should be applicable to all arms alike, whether infantry, cavalry, artillery, or engineers.

This change from 6 to practically 8 years' service will have an unfavourable effect on the Army Reserve. Under the present system the infantry Reserve may be expected to reach, in about 1890, its maximum strength of 44,000, and even this I do not consider sufficient. To meet, therefore, the effect of the extension of service, and still more to strengthen the Reserve, I propose two things: the first, that men serving at home, and not likely to be sent abroad, should be at liberty, and indeed encouraged, if the state of recruiting permits, to go into the Reserve after completing 3 or 4 years' service. One of the inducements to do this will be permission to receive, when so discharged into the Reserve, their accumulated deferred pay, none of which is now paid to men until the expiry of their full time of colour service. The second will be to allow Reserve men, on or before completing their 12 years' engagement, to volunteer for a further period of 4 years, during which they will receive pay at the rate of 4*d.* a-day, but will not be liable to be called out until after all the other Reservists. We shall limit the number of this class to 10,000. On the other hand, we propose to allow the Enrolled Pensioner Reserve gradually to die out, as such, without



diminishing the service liabilities of pensioners. It has been suggested to me that we might allow Volunteers of certain qualifications to join the Army Reserve, and I propose to take powers with this object. But I have not yet had time to mature a scheme for this purpose.

Under these conditions we hope to secure for our military system two great advantages; first, for all regiments on foreign and especially on active service, a full proportion of what are called 'seasoned soldiers,' by ensuring an average of about 8 years' service from all men not permanently invalided; and secondly, a steady flow into the Reserve, not only of men who have served 7, 8, or more years, but of a considerable number who have served 3 or 4 years, and who will bring habits of steadiness and discipline into the civil employments for which their age will well fit them. Besides this, we shall be able to set against the great increase in deferred and reserved pay a solid reduction in the Pension List, which, for non-commissioned officers and men, is rapidly approaching 2,000,000*l.* a year, but which, under our proposed system, will be applicable mainly to non-commissioned officers. Finally, I may say that this great economy will be much more felt by India than by the Imperial Exchequer, and will, I hope, be an answer to some of the plans for restoring a separate Indian army, upon which I confess I look with unmitigated dislike.

The second great branch of the changes in the period from 1867 to 1872, related to the localisation

of the Army, and especially of the Line, and I will now state our proposals on this subject.

I must premise by stating that, from everyone who has studied this branch of the question, I have heard at any rate this undoubted proposition, that we cannot leave things as they are. Either we must follow the advice of those, who, like the late Colonel Anson in 1872, or my Right Hon. friend and predecessor with his influential Committee in 1876, recommended the complete union in a territorial regiment of the four battalions, two of the Line and two of the Militia (and it must be remembered that on that Committee sat Sir H. Havelock, General Taylor, Sir G. Wolseley, General Bulwer, General Greaves, and General Herbert, besides the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Exeter, Lord Limerick, and Colonel Corbett); or, according to every opponent of the system, we must repeal our whole legislation and undo our whole policy as to a territorial army; convert the *Depôt Centre Barracks*, for which Parliament voted 3,500,000*l.*, into something else; alter the whole system of brigade enlistment; confuse the rights and seniority of every officer appointed during the last eight years, and, by making each regiment recruit for itself, through the agency of its own *depôt*, add perhaps 11,000, perhaps, according to the Appendix to Lord Airey's Report, 15,000; or, according to some, 20,000 men to the Army. The first 25 regiments of the Line, which are already double-battalion regiments, would be broken up and made into 50 single-battalion regiments, and the Rifle

Brigade and 60th Rifles would be similarly divided into 4 regiments each.

I have studied this question most carefully, with the aid of my professional advisers and by the light of the Committees which have investigated it during the last ten years, and I have come to the conclusion that in this matter we should adopt an advancing, not a retrogressive, policy. We propose, therefore, that the two battalions of the Line, and the two battalions of Militia which now form a territorial brigade shall henceforth form a territorial regiment with a county depôt; the 1st and 2nd battalions being Line and the 3rd and 4th Militia. The officers and men of the four battalions will have the same uniforms, only in the case of the men of the Militia distinguished by the letter 'M' on their shoulder straps. The insignia and distinctions of the Line regiments will be carefully preserved, but be common to both battalions. In fact, the whole Line will be organised as the 25 first regiments now are.

To this there would be two classes of exceptions. We do not propose to disturb the 4-battalion organisation of the Rifle regiments; and the special circumstances of some of the Scotch regiments require particular treatment. I will describe them with a little detail, as some most extraordinary misconceptions appear to exist about projects affecting them and their uniforms, which never entered my mind.

At present there are nine Highland regiments, the 42nd, 71st, 72nd, 74th, 78th, 79th, 91st, 92nd, and 93rd wearing the kilt or trews, two double-battalion

regiments, the Royal Scots and Royal Scots Fusiliers, and three single-battalion regiments, the 26th, 73rd, and 90th, all localised in Scotland, and one, the 75th, localised in England. We propose to group these after a new arrangement, in a manner which I will now describe.

1. The 72nd and 78th will form the Seaforth Highlanders, kilted and with the Mackenzie tartan.

2. The 92nd Gordon Highlanders will remain at Aberdeen, and the 75th will become its 2nd battalion, and receive the same dress.

3. The 42nd will continue at Perth, and the 73rd, which is a Perthshire regiment, formerly the 2nd battalion of the 42nd, will receive the same dress, and form with it the 'Black Watch.'

4. The 79th will have their depôt at Inverness, and will be the odd battalion of the total 141 of the Army.

5. The 91st and 93rd will form a regiment, with their depôt at Stirling. They will be dressed in the kilt, wearing the tartan, which, we understand, is common to the Argyll and Sutherland clans.

6. The 71st and 74th will be combined at Hamilton as the Highland Light Infantry.

7. At Hamilton also will be the 26th and 90th, formed into a Rifle regiment. The other two depôts, Edinburgh and Ayr, will remain unchanged. There will thus be 9 kilted battalions and 2 in trews, as against 5 kilted and 4 in trews at present.

Among the papers which will be distributed to-morrow will be found full details of the changes as to

uniforms, titles, badges, and colours, which this amalgamation of the regiments will involve.

This, Sir, is, I think, the place for explaining to the House what changes I propose in the establishments of the infantry resulting in an aggregate increase of 2,792 men. One of the most important reforms which a study of these questions has impressed on me is the necessity for increasing our preparedness for such minor wars and expeditions as the history of the last 10 years has shown to be unavoidable. Should we be engaged in a European war, or a war for the preservation of our Indian Empire, we should of course at once call out the Army Reserve, and 25,000 trained men so added to the army, to say nothing of the Militia Reserve, would, even in the present state of the Reserve, fill our battalions at home with seasoned men, ready to take the field. But we ought to be ready for contingencies of a much less serious character, and I will explain to the House how we propose to effect this.

According to the Establishments of the year 1880-81 there were:—

|   |   |   |   |     |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|-----|---|---|
| 6 Battalions at home consisting of 800 rank and file. |   |   |   |     |   |   |
| 6   | ” | ” | ” | 720 | ” | ” |
| 6   | ” | ” | ” | 640 | ” | ” |
| 6   | ” | ” | ” | 560 | ” | ” |
| 43  | ” | ” | ” | 480 | ” | ” |

All with depôts of 80, except in the case of 8 brigades having both their battalions abroad, which had 280.

In the Colonies there were 24 battalions, of which—

15 had an establishment of 600 rank and file.

9       "       "       "       800       "       "

We propose that in future there shall be—

At home 12 Battalions of 950 rank and file.

      "       4       "       850       "       "

      "       4       "       650       "       "

      "       8       "       500       "       "

      "       43       "       480       "       "

Eight of the battalions of 950 and four of those at 850 will have depôts of 150 rank and file, which will furnish drafts to the other battalion of the regiment ; the remainder small depôts of 50.

In the Mediterranean and the Colonies there will be 20 battalions, each of 800 rank and file.

The 12 first regiments, containing, with their depôts, 1,100 rank and file each, and six of the Mediterranean regiments, containing 800 men each, and ready to be raised to 1,000 efficient from their home battalions, will, with three battalions of the Guards, six regiments of Cavalry, and 17 batteries of Horse and Field Artillery, be always in a state of preparedness ; and next to the 12 home regiments will come four of 850 each, which could also promptly be raised to war strength. We shall thus, after these changes have been completed, be able at any moment and on the shortest notice to bring together and despatch a Corps d'Armée, consisting of 18 battalions of the Line, 3 of the Guards, 6 regiments of Cavalry, and 17 batteries of Artillery ; and this without trench-

ing on the 4 regiments of Infantry required for our annual reliefs, under a system which I will endeavour to explain to the House.

At present our seventy battalions abroad (fifty in India and twenty in the Colonies) are relieved by other regiments at the rate of six a year. These frequent reliefs not only are a source of great expense to India, but, under the system of double-battalion regiments, will be to a great extent unnecessary. We propose that, in future, reliefs of whole battalions should be, to a great extent, superseded by annual reliefs by drafts, both in the case of officers and men, so that neither officer nor man should serve in India for more than eight years. The head-quarters of the battalion would be relieved about every sixteen years, in some cases by the other battalion of the regiment, in others by another regiment, but so that every year one regiment furnishing a battalion to India will come on to the Colonial roster, and similarly one from the Colonial roster will come on the list of those furnishing battalions to India. Every regiment will thus take its turn for Indian and Colonial service, but at a much less expense than under the present system.

I pass now to the third branch of the reforms which we contemplate, namely, those which concern pay, promotion, and retirement. I will take first the non-commissioned officer. I have already explained the advantages we propose to give this important class in respect of what has been called 'Assured Service'—in other words, the right to

continue in the Army until they have acquired pensions, with the privilege of transfer to the permanent Staff of the Militia. We propose, however, much more than this. Every regimental sergeant-major will in future have the rank of a warrant officer, with pay in the infantry of 5*s.* a day, and with a higher rate of pension. Similar boons will be given to non-commissioned officers of an equivalent position. Colour-sergeants will receive on appointment 3*s.* a day, and sergeants on promotion 2*s.* 4*d.* a day. Corporals' pay, when confirmed, will be 1*s.* 8*d.* a day, including good-conduct pay. The rates of pension throughout will be re-modelled, and generally to the soldier's advantage.

We are in communication with other departments, with a view to increasing the number of civil appointments to be granted to non-commissioned officers, as recommended by the Committee of which I was chairman in the last Parliament.

We have also, as I promised last Session, taken up the cases of the quarter-masters and riding-masters. I propose to make additions to the rates of pay which quarter-masters of infantry and cavalry receive on their appointment to that rank. These will be substantial; the lowest rate for a quarter-master of infantry being fixed at 9*s.* a day instead of 8*s.* 2*d.*, and rising by increases of 1*s.* 6*d.* a day every five years to 13*s.* 6*d.* Quarter-masters will be retired at the age of 55, their pensions being fixed at 200*l.* a year, with twelve years' service as quarter-master. To riding-masters I contemplate giving the same ad-



vantages as regards retirement, and they will receive their present rates of pay, free from the stoppage for forage to which they are now subject.

But the more important reforms in connection with pay, promotion, and retirement, are those which affect the great body of combatant officers, and I must ask the indulgence of the House while I explain to them our proposals in some detail.

I have already referred to the, to my mind, inadequate recommendations of Lord Penzance's Commission, which led to the Royal Warrant of 1877, and I hope that both with respect to compulsory retirement from regimental ranks, and to the system according to which the establishment of general officers is framed, the proposals that I am about to explain will form the basis of very beneficial improvements.

The great blot in the present system of regimental promotion and retirement is the enormous number of compulsory retirements from the service at an early age, which will shortly be inevitable. I will deal separately with the case of purchase officers; I mean of officers who obtained their present rank by purchase; but the very unsatisfactory prospects of regimental non-purchase officers, when the present system reaches its normal condition, will be understood at a glance when I give the following figures, the result of careful actuarial calculation. Out of 1,000 gentlemen who enter the Line as second-lieutenants, excluding those whose object is to join the Indian Staff Corps, no less than 581 will be compulsorily retired as captains at the age of 40 on 200*l.* a year. Of course

this number would be diminished by any voluntary retirements. Only 216 have any chance of becoming employed as majors, and only 139 as lieutenant-colonels. About the same proportions will be found in the cavalry and in the Guards. In due time, as a consequence of these forced retirements, there will be up and down the country nearly 4,500 captains ejected from the Army at the early age of 40, and costing the country 900,000*l.* a-year, besides some 500 more, compulsorily retired as majors. It is undoubtedly necessary to provide some retirement from these ranks, but that more than half the number of captains should be compelled to retire from that rank is intolerable. Now, as I have already shown, there is one way, and only one way, in which this evil can be abated ; that is, the re-adjustment of the proportions of the several regimental ranks. Lord Penzance's Commission refer to this remedy, and some details on the subject will be found in the Appendices to their Report; but they considered themselves precluded by their instructions from entertaining it. I have, however, given most careful attention to this, the only method of putting regimental retirement on a satisfactory footing ; and, with the entire concurrence of the Commander-in-Chief, we have elaborated a scheme which I will now explain to the House.

A double-battalion infantry regiment has now 2 lieutenant-colonels, 4 majors, 20 captains, and 34 subalterns, two of whom are adjutants.

We propose that the future organisation should be 2 lieutenant-colonels commanding, 2 second lieu-

tenant-colonels, 8 majors, 12 captains (2 of whom will be adjutants), and 30 subalterns. Under this organisation the battalion at home and the battalion abroad will each have one officer less, while at the depôt there will be, besides the colonel commanding the sub-district, a lieutenant-colonel, 4 captains, including 2 supernumeraries as adjutants of militia, and two subalterns. We propose at the same time to do away with the rank of second lieutenant, giving the same pay to lieutenants of less than three years' service.

This change will greatly reduce the amount of compulsory retirement ; as, under it, instead of 216, no less than 516 officers out of 1,000 will, in the Line, reach the rank of major ; but we also propose another change for the benefit of captains. Instead of leaving the service at the age of 40, captains will be allowed, at that age, to go to a list of unattached majors, from which list, as well as from regimental captains, officers will be in future selected for regimental majorities and equivalent Staff appointments. At the age of 43, however, an unattached major must retire on 200*l.* a-year, with the honorary rank of lieutenant-colonel. In the next grade, a major, on completing 7 years' service, will become an unattached lieutenant-colonel, unless he has sooner reached the age of 48, when he must retire ; and vacancies in the regimental rank of lieutenant-colonel, or on the Staff, will be filled by selection from majors serving and lieutenant-colonels unattached. This increase in the number of field officers will, I may say

in passing, warrant us in greatly reducing for the future the grants of brevet rank.

In the two Ordnance Corps the reform effected by Lord Cardwell, under which the rank of major was conferred on the senior captains, has rendered unnecessary any general reorganisation of either the Artillery or Engineers. But certain grievances have remained, which were brought before Parliament in 1879 by Colonel Arbuthnot; and I promised last year instead of appointing a Royal Commission on the subject, to inquire into them departmentally. I shall lay on the table the Report of the Committee which I appointed, with Lord Morley as chairman, and I hope that their recommendations, which I have generally adopted, will be satisfactory to the House, and to the officers concerned. As the House is aware, Colonel Arbuthnot's principal demand, namely, that the officers of these two distinguished corps should be declared, for the future, equally eligible with the rest of the Army for commands and Staff appointments, has been formally and conclusively recognised.

I referred just now to the case of Purchase officers. We propose two changes, both of which have been the subject of debates in this House. The first relates to Purchase captains, in whose interest we continued last year the system of Succession Brevet promotions to October 1881. We propose that, in future, all Purchase captains should be allowed, on retirement after 20 years' service, the rank of major, which will carry with it the honorary rank of lieutenant-colonel. The other change refers to the

near relatives of officers who have been killed in action or died of wounds. We propose finally to settle this often-debated question by giving to these relatives the full regulation value of the commission held by the officer in the shape of an annuity or annuities, if these should exceed in value the rates of pension laid down in the present warrant.

I come next to the establishment of general officers. Omitting the Indian Staff Corps and the Marines, the active list now consists of 77 generals, 116 lieutenant-generals, and 194 major-generals, or 387 in all. Their method of remuneration, whether before or after retirement, is certainly most anomalous, and the best that Lord Penzance's Commission could say for it was that it was not unpopular. Speaking generally, all these officers, whether active or retired, receive (besides, in some cases, good service rewards of 100*l.* a year), 450*l.* a year until they succeed to the honorary colonelcy of a regiment, or a colonel commandantship in the Artillery and Engineers, worth 1,000*l.* a year; and the only cause for removal from the active to the retired list is, attaining 70 years of age. We propose, with respect to these officers, to apply the principles of the system of pay, promotion, and retirement of flag officers in the Navy. Their number will be reduced to 140—95 major-generals, 35 lieutenant-generals, and 10 generals. The first will retire at 62 years of age, the other two ranks at 67, all two years later than the corresponding ranks of the Navy. Non-employment for 5 years will also involve retirement. The scale of pay will be—

|                              |                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| For a Major-General . . . .  | 500 <i>l.</i> a year. |
| „ Lieutenant-General . . . . | 650 <i>l.</i> „       |
| „ General . . . . .          | 800 <i>l.</i> „       |

and the rates of retired pay will be 700*l.*, 850*l.*, and 1,000*l.* a year respectively, with the right of earlier optional retirement at a somewhat reduced rate. Subject to vested interests, which will be very carefully guarded, the colonelcies of regiments will be purely honorary ; but in consideration of this change, as affecting the colonels of the household regiments, the number of field-m Marshals will be raised to a maximum of 6, with pay at the rate of 1,300*l.* a year for life. In addition to these permanent arrangements, temporary provision will be made for the present senior colonels whose pecuniary interests may be prejudiced by the change. Good service rewards will not be received after retirement, and their number will be gradually diminished to one-half.

I may say here that promotion to the rank of major-general will in future be given to any colonel of the arm in which the vacancy occurs, whom the Commander-in-Chief may recommend, and whom he considers that it will be for the benefit of the public service to promote. In the absence of such a recommendation the senior colonel qualified to command in the field will be promoted.

As a rule, all these arrangements will take effect on the 1st July next.

The House will now be desirous to know what will be the financial result of the reforms which I have

explained ; but in accordance with my promise I will only give the general result, reserving the details for Committee.

The increase in the length of service from 6 to 7 and 8 years, with the extended system of relief by drafts, and the increased proportion of non-commissioned officers and men allowed still further to extend their service, set against the addition to the numbers of the infantry, will cause an ultimate small saving to the Exchequer, which will be about balanced by an increased charge for the other arms. The improved pay of non-commissioned officers is provided for in the present Estimates. The saving to India will be about 200,000*l.* a year.

Again, the effective charge for officers from the grade of subaltern upwards will hardly be altered by my proposed changes. But the non-effective charge will be considerably reduced, and the combined saving is calculated by the actuaries at about 230,000*l.* to the English Exchequer, and 14,000*l.* to India. This is, of course, mainly due to the decrease in the number of gentlemen entering the Army, which the great reduction in compulsory retirement will bring about. Instead of 451 young men annually becoming officers, the number of entries will be just 400, and the total number of officers, active and retired, which, under the present system in its normal condition should be about 14,600, will be only 12,500. The actual prospect of an officer entering the service will be considerably improved.

Taking, then, the whole of the reforms which we

contemplate as to men and officers, India and this country will each, in the end, gain not much less than a quarter of a million a year, while both the officer and the soldier will be pecuniarily the better by the average addition to their term of service.

I come, now, Sir, to the last branch of my subject, I mean the fulfilment of the promise which I gave to the House last year relating to Corporal Punishment. As in the Navy, we propose that in the Army corporal punishment shall be abolished. For the offences, on account of which it may now be inflicted, we propose to substitute a summary punishment in the shape of restraint without injury to life or limb, the exact nature of which I will explain when moving the Army Discipline Continuance Bill. It will be also available as a punishment for an offence not now subjecting the soldier to flogging, I mean drunkenness on active service. I am very conscious of the reluctance with which, step by step, the majority of officers have seen corporal punishment disappearing from the Statute Book: but without reopening now this old controversy, I think I may safely say that the compromise of 1879, which limited this punishment to the case of offences punishable by death, was the doom of flogging; and I trust that the greater popularity of the Army, and the consequent improvement in recruiting, which I do not hesitate to predict as the result of this final step, will reconcile to it many of those who, before 1879, reluctantly clung to corporal punishment as a necessity.

I have now, Sir, finished my task in laying before



the House a sketch of our military proposals. It may be thought that at a moment when we have scarcely recovered from the strain of the campaigns in Afghanistan and Zululand, when we have been compelled suddenly to collect a large force for operations in Natal and the Transvaal, when we may have another Ashanti War on us, and above all when we have been compelled to keep in Ireland a larger and better organised force than that country has seen for many years, it was not the time to deal with such grave questions as the length of service, the linking of battalions, or the compulsory retirement of our officers. I am, however, Sir, of a different opinion. It is to these very events that we owe the dissection of our system by able and experienced hands, and the exposure of its weak points. I offer our reforms to the House of Commons, assured that they will not be ill-received by those who will see in them evidence of our deep anxiety for the well-being of the Army; and confident that if adopted by Parliament they will add greatly to our military strength and security.













